

OTHER VIEWS

BR judge genuine role model

What does it mean to be a role model? We often hear athletes talk about wanting to be better role models, but that is easier said than done. Anyone looking for an example of an outstanding role model should check the achievements of state District Court Judge Trudy White of Baton Rouge.

First, however, let's talk about the latest athlete promising to be a better role model. He is LSU running back Jeremy Hill, who has been in trouble with the law on more than one occasion. Hill has been reinstated on the team, and made the following statement during a news conference:

"First of all I want to thank Coach (Les) Miles and this university for giving me another chance to play football," Hill said. "And I would like to apologize to first my teammates, and the community. I made a poor choice in judgment, but since then I've learned from my mistake, and moving forward I'll continue to be a better person, continue to be a better teammate and continue to be a role model for the kids in the community. And thank you."

Other LSU players have had their legal problems, and they didn't succeed at being good examples for the younger generation. We hope Hill becomes an exception, but it wouldn't hurt him to give serious consideration to what Judge White told a recently convicted hit man.

The Advocate said White and hit man Michael "Marlo Mike" Louding have something in common: both were born and raised in the crime-plagued 70802 ZIP code area of south Baton Rouge. White last month sentenced Louding to life in prison without benefit of parole on a murder charge. The newspaper said Louding was expelled from Westdale Middle School as a seventh-grader in 2008 after he was caught with a gun on campus. He never attended high school.

White had some strong words for Louding during his sentencing hearing.

"What is the difference between

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those who achieve and those who don't?" the judge asked at the hearing. "Simply stated, education. In fact, correctional officials look to the percentage of children who never make it past the fourth-grade reading level to help gauge the number of future prison beds that will be needed."

Parental and societal support are also critical for success, the judge said.

White noted that others from the 70802 area have also become success stories and great role models. Among them are former Southern University System President Delores Spikes, the late legendary Grambling State University football coach Eddie Robinson Sr., Court of Appeal Judge John Michael Guidry of the 1st Circuit Court, Southern University Law Center Chancellor and retired Judge Freddie Pitcher Jr., blues singer Buddy Guy, "American Idol" host Randy Jackson, former LSU basketball players Glen "Big Baby" Davis, Tyrus Thomas and Ethan Martin, and a number of prominent businessmen, attorneys and educators.

"Has anything good come out of south Baton Rouge?" White asked. "Absolutely."

A look at White's record says it all. She is a native of Baton Rouge, a graduate of Howard University and the LSU Law Center. She is a graduate of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

In 1999, White was the first African-American female elected to the Baton Rouge City Court. She became a 19th Judicial District Court judge in 2009. She has been called "the People's Judge" for her active involvement in the Baton Rouge community.

The YWCA recognized her with its "Racial Justice" and "Speak Truth to Power" awards in 2008. The Louisi-

ana State Bar Association selected her for its 2009 Crystal Gavel Award for her efforts in educating the public and students about legal matters.

Unlike some, Judge White acknowledges there is a "culture of violence in our society involving black youth and young adults."

The Advocate said Louding, 20, who is black, was found guilty in the 2009 murder-for-hire of Terry Boyd, 35. The newspaper said prosecutors contend Louding, 17 at the time, fatally shot Boyd at the behest of gangsta rap artist Torence "Lil Boosie" Hatch.

White said gangsta rap lyrics typically are known for promoting crime, violence, profanity, the hatred of women by men, sex outside of marriage, street gangs, murder, drug-dealing and materialism.

"Gangsta rappers have bought into the belief that a negative image is necessary to elicit high volume sales of CDs, DVDs and Mp3s," the judge said. "The producers and promoters of gangsta rap have coldly calculated the potential profits available from positive and negative messages" and "have concluded that antisocial messages are more profitable than pro-social messages. This is a business that is designed to profit from harming its consumers and our society."

For demonstrating rare courage, White deserves a "Tell It Like It Is" award. Others have talked about problems in black communities, but have found only a handful of black leaders willing to face the facts.

As White said, there are many black role models who live up to the title. Unfortunately, not enough of them get the recognition they deserve. Maybe that's where black leadership needs to focus its attention. However, nothing is going to happen until black leaders are willing to admit there are serious issues in some of their communities that have been ignored much too long.

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